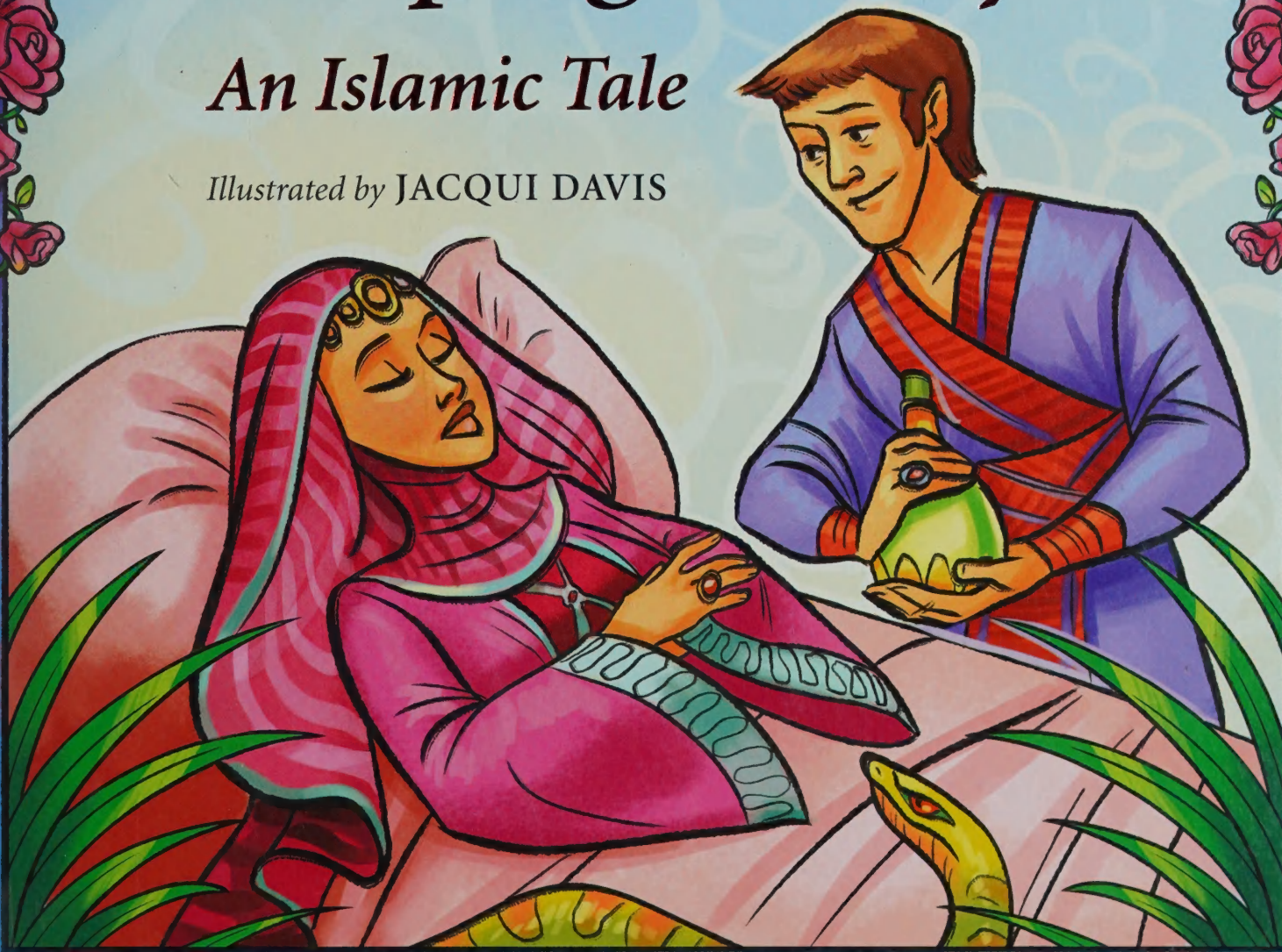



FAWZIA GILANI'S

Sleeping Beauty

An Islamic Tale

Illustrated by JACQUI DAVIS





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Sleeping Beauty

An Islamic Tale



To Dr. Farnaz Baig and Dr. Khalid Akbar who, with three young children, battled icy, snow-filled roads to reach us throughout the Ohio winter of 2003. I thought you were angels in disguise. We love you.

Note to Parents and Teachers

Please note that an asterisk* has been used in the text to indicate where Muslims should say a blessing after mentioning the name of a Prophet of Islam* (peace and blessings be upon him).

Sleeping Beauty: An Islamic Tale

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In the name of Allah, the One God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

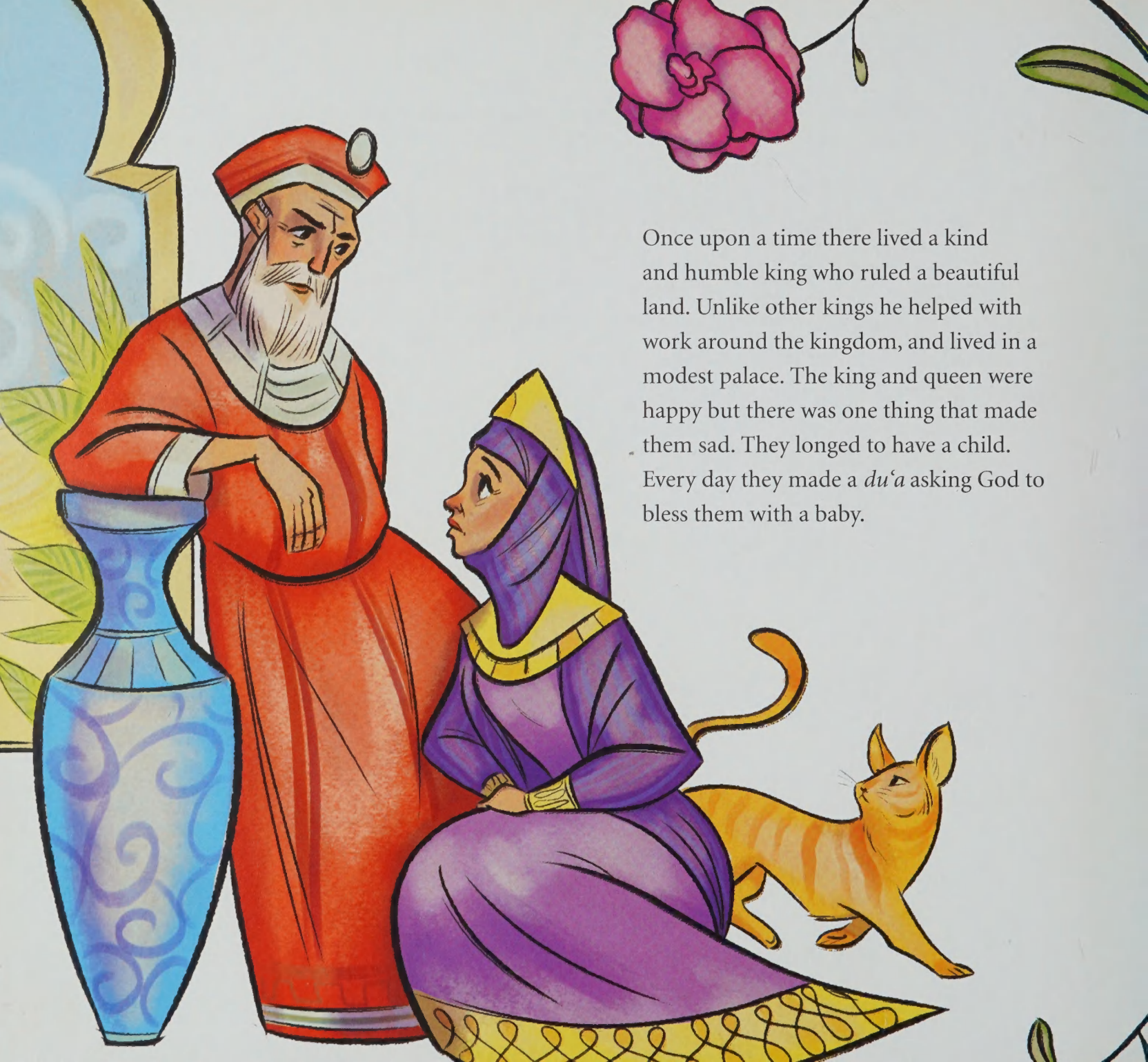
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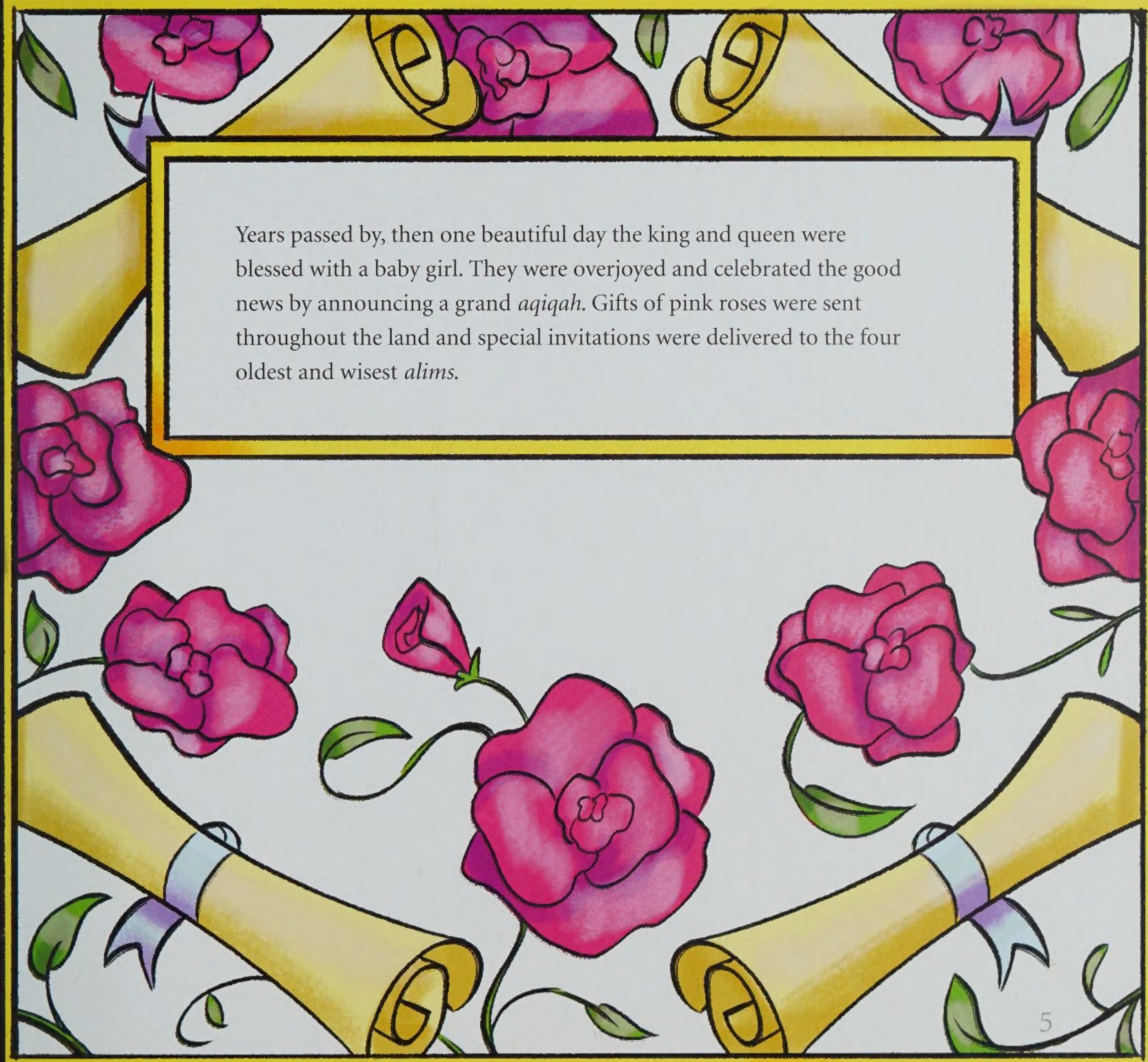


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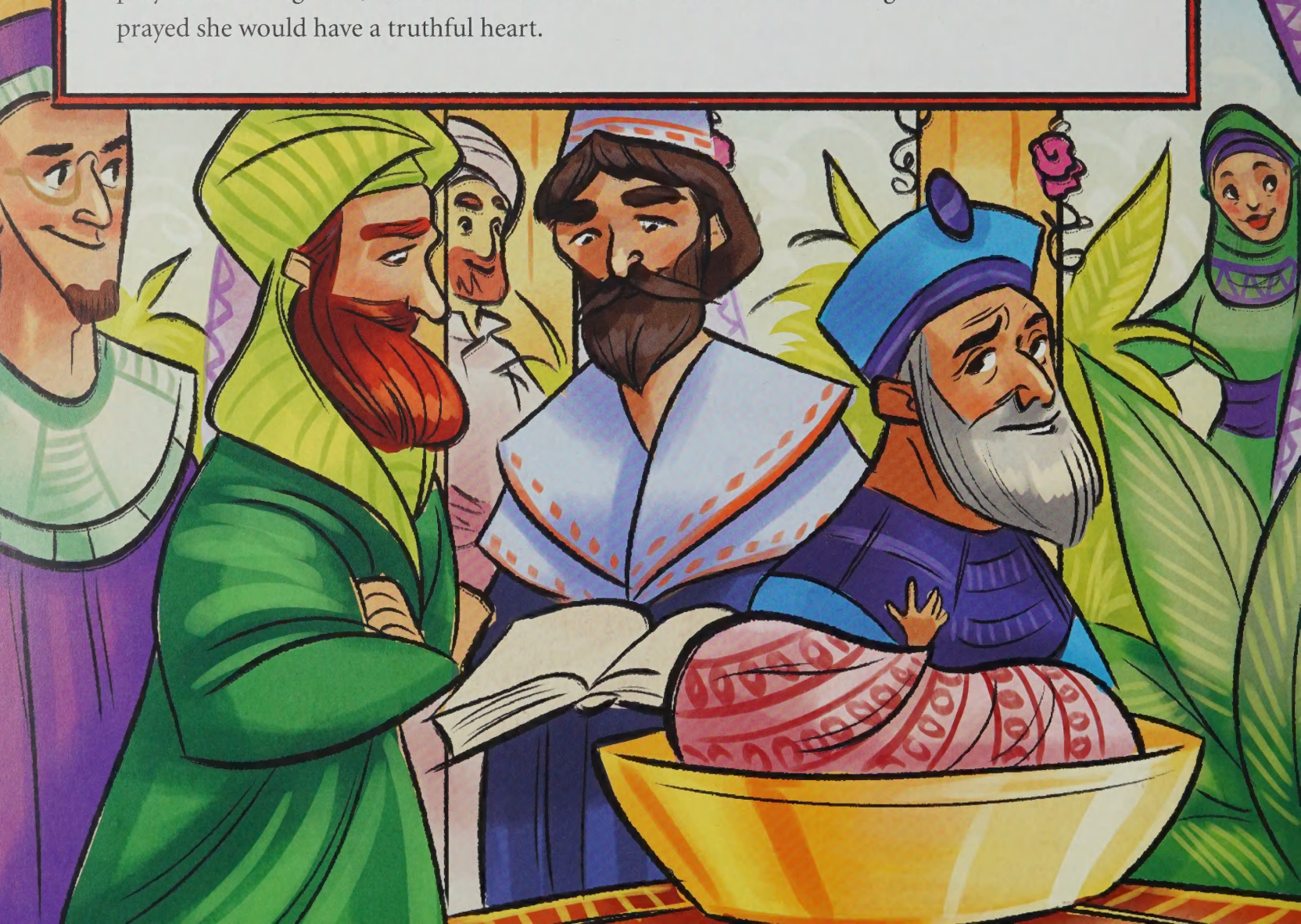


Once upon a time there lived a kind and humble king who ruled a beautiful land. Unlike other kings he helped with work around the kingdom, and lived in a modest palace. The king and queen were happy but there was one thing that made them sad. They longed to have a child. Every day they made a *du'a* asking God to bless them with a baby.



Years passed by, then one beautiful day the king and queen were blessed with a baby girl. They were overjoyed and celebrated the good news by announcing a grand *aqiqah*. Gifts of pink roses were sent throughout the land and special invitations were delivered to the four oldest and wisest *alims*.

The *aqiqah* began with an orphan child reciting the Qur'an. Soon tables were laden with the finest foods; fireworks dazzled the night sky and the melody of prayers floated in the hallways. As the feast came to an end, each of the *alims* made a *du'a* for the baby princess. The first prayed for strong faith; the second that the child would be constant in good deeds. The third prayed she would have a truthful heart.






As each *du'a* was made, the hall echoed with ameens.

The fourth *alim* was about to make a *du'a* when loud, thundering knocks were heard on the banquet hall doors. Silence filled the room as a tall, dark figure was invited in. "As-salamu 'alaykum," said the king, "please, be welcome."

The figure walked slowly into the hall, the soles of his shoes tapping loudly on the marble floor. The lines of guests stood silently. Then, a booming voice shouted, “So, you did not invite *me* to the child’s *aqiqah*!”

The figure threw back his hood. “It is I, Count Lahab!” roared the stranger. A scar ran across his face and a deadly snake hung around his shoulders. “Let me also give your child some gifts,” he hissed. For Lahab longed to take vengeance against the king who had banished him for practising dark magic.



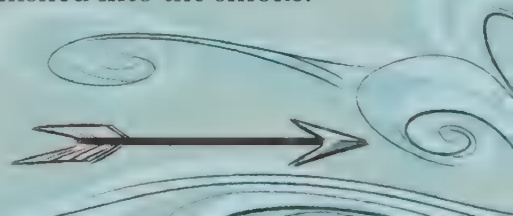


Fear filled the hall. The queen hurriedly picked up the baby and she began to recite Surah al-Falaq to the little girl:

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful,
*Say: "I seek refuge with the Lord of the Dawn
From the mischief of created things;
From the mischief of Darkness as it overspreads;
From the mischief of those who practise Secret Arts;
And from the mischief of the envious one as he practises envy."*¹

"Still putting your faith in God, I see," laughed Count Lahab. Then he yelled, "My gift to your child is vengeance. When she is at her happiest my power will leave her poisoned, and dead!"

Lahab snarled and reached for the venomous snake. Before he could hurl it at the king a tall woman dressed in a green *abaya* drew a bow and shot an arrow at the Count. At once, Lahab threw a handful of powder and he vanished into the smoke.





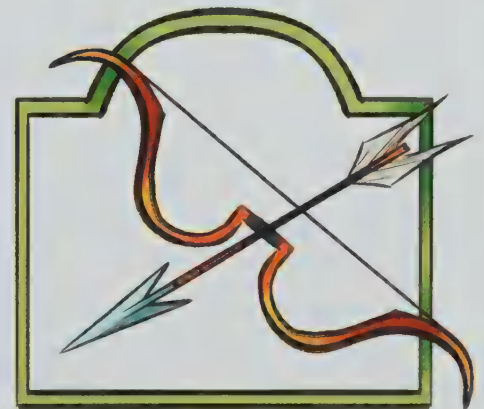
The hall fell silent. The final *alim* stepped forward. “My king, my brother, do not despair. Let us pray.” He cupped his hands together and raised them in the air. “Dear Allah, protect this child from the curse cast by the Count and keep her in the company of those whose prayers and actions can lift any of Lahab’s wicked whispers.”



After the *aqiqah* it was agreed that the child would be hidden within the palace. She would be raised under the care and guidance of the woman with the bow, Lady Masarah.

Upon hearing her task, the lady in the green *abaya* gently took the baby in her arms. “Fear not,” she said to the king and queen, “have trust in God, for Allah says in the Qur’an,

But Allah has full knowledge of your enemies: Allah is enough for a protector, and Allah is enough for a helper.²”





Lady Masarah watched over the princess just as she watched over the orphan, Haris. She had raised Haris since he was a baby. The boy was very kind. He loved to care for plants and spend time cooking. But it was for his beautiful voice that he was famous. When he read the Qur'an, everyone would stop and listen.

Haris was never far from the baby. When she cried he would run to her side and sing her to sleep. If she was ill, he would help care for her and watch over her during the night. As she grew older she loved to hear the stories Haris told and listen to him recite verses from the Qur'an.

The years passed by and Haris left to study with the wise *alims* of the kingdom. Zaynab, as the princess was called, grew up to have strong *iman*, a kind heart and a keen sense of justice. She also became a skilled archer like Lady Masarah and loved to read.

Although the princess seemed safe the king was still fearful. "Lahab's evil threat still exists," he said. "Perhaps it is time for Zaynab to choose a partner. Inshallah he is someone who is strong and God-conscious. Let us invite princes from near and far."



Over the years many suitors had come to ask for Zaynab's hand. However, the young princes always appeared arrogant or dishonest, lazy or selfish.

One day a rich prince came to propose to Zaynab. The king and queen invited the prince to dinner and to join them for archery practice. The prince boasted that he was the best archer in the land. However, when they practised shooting he became furious when Zaynab was able to match his skill.

It so happened that Haris was also visiting and helped to prepare dinner for the guest. When the food was ready, as was the king's custom, all who cooked it were invited to sit at the table to eat with them. The visiting prince was seated and Haris asked, "Brother would you like lamb or beef?"

The prince eyed Haris up and down and said, "You shall address me as, your majesty, for I am a prince." He then tapped on his plate and said, "Beef!"

Haris was about to serve him when Zaynab arose and said, "Please step aside Haris," before turning to the prince. "God Almighty says, 'Do not turn your nose up at people, nor walk about the place arrogantly, for God does not love arrogant or boastful people.'"³

The prince looked at Zaynab in shock. "A princess who defends a peasant and a king who eats with servants? This kingdom is a pitiful place. I'm afraid I'm not feeling well. I regret I must leave."

Without another word, the prince threw down his napkin and marched out. Haris excused himself and hurried after him.



There was silence at the table until the king spoke.

“Many men have come to ask for your hand, Zaynab. Perhaps you could tell us what kind of a person would make a good husband?”

“Yes, Father,” said Zaynab as she looked up. “Someone who has *taqwa*, is brave and likes to cook, someone who thinks flowers are beautiful.”

“Very well,” said the king. “Then perhaps you might consider Haris?”

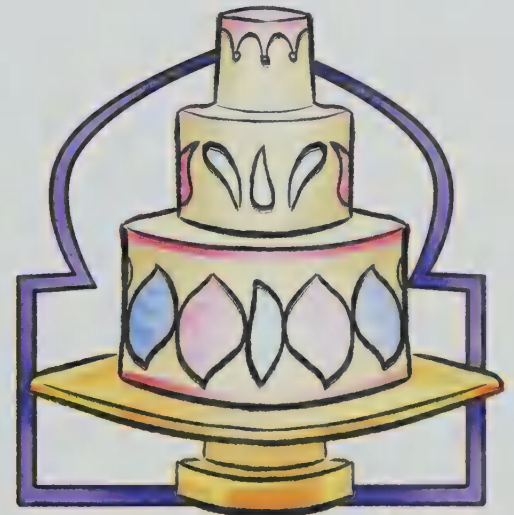
When Haris returned he was carrying a rose. “Look Zaynab,” he said. “I found something to make you smile.”

A simple *nikah* was arranged and Haris and Zaynab were married. News of the marriage was announced and throughout the land there was great rejoicing.





The palace bustled with preparations as a date was set for a grand *walimah*.
Gifts arrived and tailors travelled from afar to prepare a dress for the princess.
The halls were decorated with verses from the Qur'an and the most fragrant roses.
The king's chefs were busy baking and cooking.





It was not long before news of the princess's *walimah* reached the cave of Count Lahab. "Finally," he hissed, "the time has come for me to take my vengeance!" He threw back his head and let out a menacing laugh.

Lahab had soon devised a wicked plan. He stirred and brewed a venomous potion. He crafted the finest hijab pins. And then, one by one, dipped them into the poison.

The wicked Count carefully placed the hijab pins in an elegantly crafted wooden case and then disguised himself as a feeble old man.



Lahab set out toward the palace. He showed the palace guards his precious gifts. The gold shined, the stones glistened and the guards agreed to let the old man enter. Soon he was presented to the princess and held out the case. “They are the finest hijab pins in the kingdom!” said Lahab as he opened the lid, revealing the elegant pins. “Jazaki Allahu Khayran!” said Zaynab, “May Allah reward you for your beautiful gifts.”



Lahab took out a pin and held it out to the princess. "These pins leave no marks in cloth and cause no injury. See for yourself," said the count. Zaynab took the pin and wove it through her hijab. It moved through the folds effortlessly. When she pulled it out, sure enough, the pin left no trace. She looked at the sharp point.

"It will not stab you," said the Count, "touch it."

The princess's eyes were still. Her finger came up to touch the point.

"Ouch!" said Zaynab. The pin had punctured her finger. She fell to the ground.

In an instant Lady Masarah, who was never far from the princess, drew her bow and aimed it at the old man. A cloud of dark smoke appeared and the evil count had gone.



The king was called immediately. He gently picked up the princess and carried her to her room. "Summon the doctor at once," cried the king, "Lahab has poisoned Zaynab!"



The doctor arrived and a grief stricken Haris returned to find his wife in a deep sleep. The princess slept with no sign that she would awake.

Doctors came and went. Medicines, mixtures, elixirs and herbs were given to the princess, but still she did not stir. *Ayahs* of the Qur'an were read to her. *Du'a* upon *du'a* was made for her, but her eyes remained closed.



The four *alims* who had attended the *aqiqah* came to visit Zaynab and offer words of comfort to the king and queen. The men sat silently making *du'as* for the princess.

The oldest *alim* summoned Haris. "Young Haris," he said, "gather your strength and take leave of your duties to perform *umrah*. When you reach the Kaaba pray for Zaynab's recovery. For the traveller's prayer is surely answered."⁴

The *alim* continued, "From the Valley of Abraham* bring back Zamzam water. The water was a miraculous gift to Mother Hajar. It is not like other water because of its nutrients. It may, if Allah wills, help the sick."

The old man sat for a moment and then looked at Haris. "Remember my child," he said, "there is no cure except from Allah, it is not Zamzam that cures, it is the Almighty. Go my boy and be constant in your *du'a*."

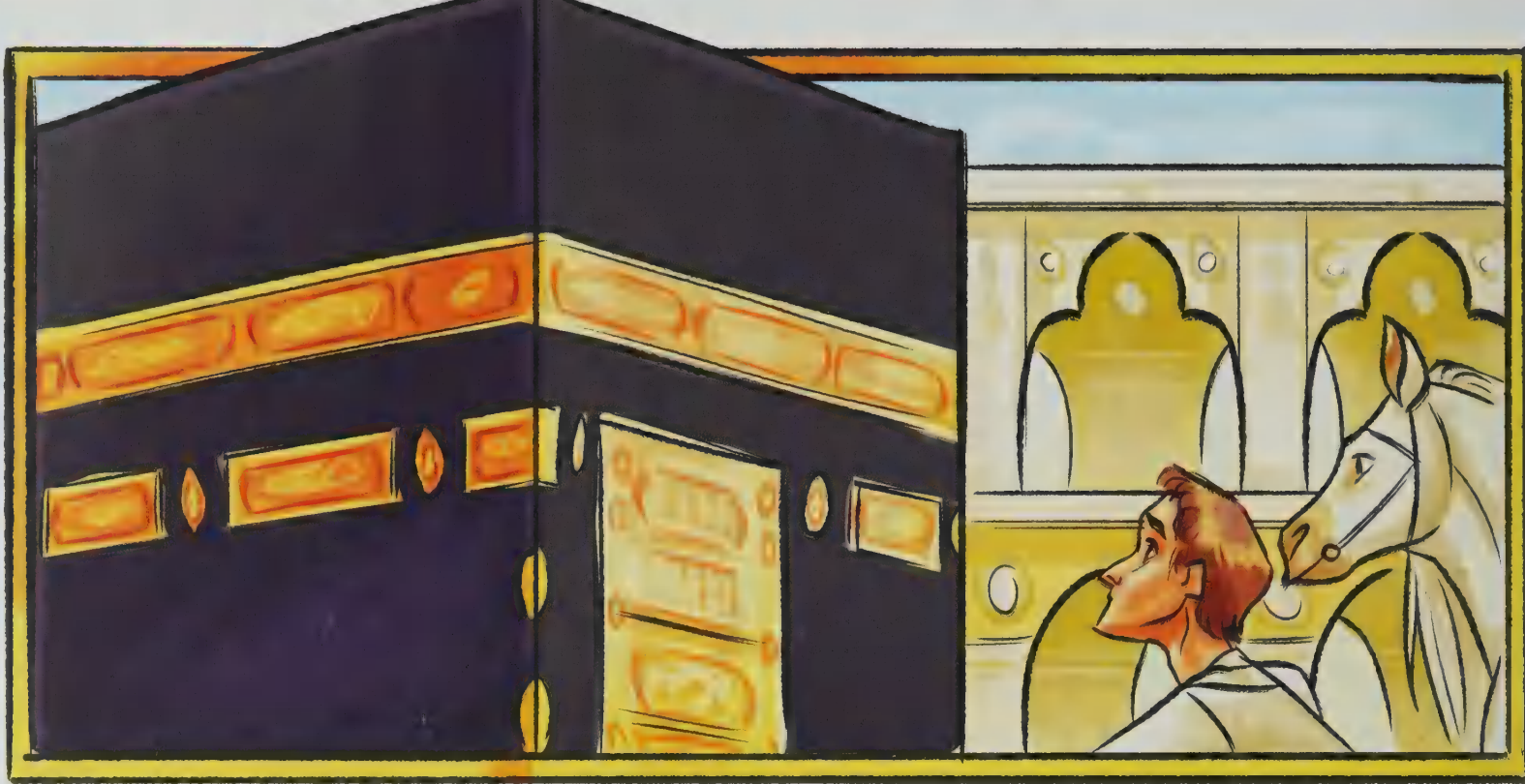


Haris lost no time and rode swiftly towards the Kaaba in Makkah. It was a journey filled with hardship and peril. When difficulties surrounded him, he would call on God to help him in *sujud*. At times Haris had little to eat and little to drink. He spent the nights sleeping on rough ground with stones and thistles digging into his back. Wild animals gave pursuit through forests and mountains; poisonous creatures lurked in waters and dunes.





Thunderstorms drenched, and sandstorms blinded. Cold biting winds lashed against the young rider, throwing him from side to side. As he travelled through the desert, the sun burned against his back, but Haris rode on, determined to reach Makkah.



When Haris finally saw the Kaaba, he stood in awe of the House that Prophet Abraham* had built.

Haris then performed *umrah*. He circled the Kaaba and walked briskly between Safa and Marwa. Haris prayed throughout his pilgrimage, asking God for forgiveness, guidance and the well-being of his beloved Zaynab. As he got ready to leave he filled two flasks with Zamzam water and then strapped them carefully to his side.

As Haris rode out of Makkah he looked up towards the sky and prayed. "Dear Lord, I beseech You to watch over me and those that I love."

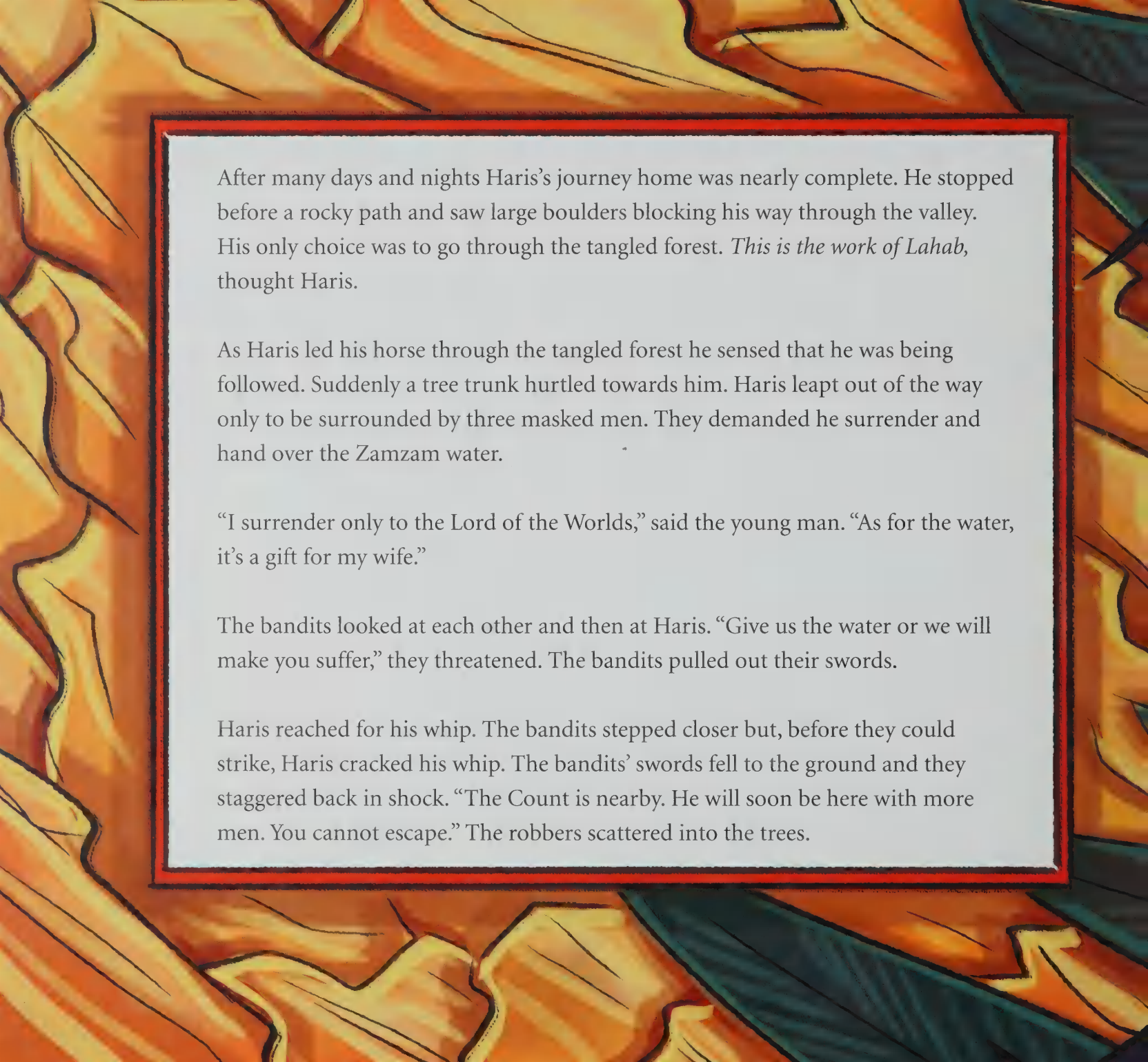


Meanwhile, Lahab was plotting. His spies had heard about Haris's plan. The furious count clenched his fists and smashed them against his table. "I must find Haris and stop him at once," he screamed.

Lahab stormed out of his cave and instructed his bandits to lay in wait. "You must bring me the Zamzam water and its carrier!" he ordered.

The bandits set off to lead Haris into a trap.





After many days and nights Haris's journey home was nearly complete. He stopped before a rocky path and saw large boulders blocking his way through the valley. His only choice was to go through the tangled forest. *This is the work of Lahab,* thought Haris.

As Haris led his horse through the tangled forest he sensed that he was being followed. Suddenly a tree trunk hurtled towards him. Haris leapt out of the way only to be surrounded by three masked men. They demanded he surrender and hand over the Zamzam water.

"I surrender only to the Lord of the Worlds," said the young man. "As for the water, it's a gift for my wife."

The bandits looked at each other and then at Haris. "Give us the water or we will make you suffer," they threatened. The bandits pulled out their swords.

Haris reached for his whip. The bandits stepped closer but, before they could strike, Haris cracked his whip. The bandits' swords fell to the ground and they staggered back in shock. "The Count is nearby. He will soon be here with more men. You cannot escape." The robbers scattered into the trees.



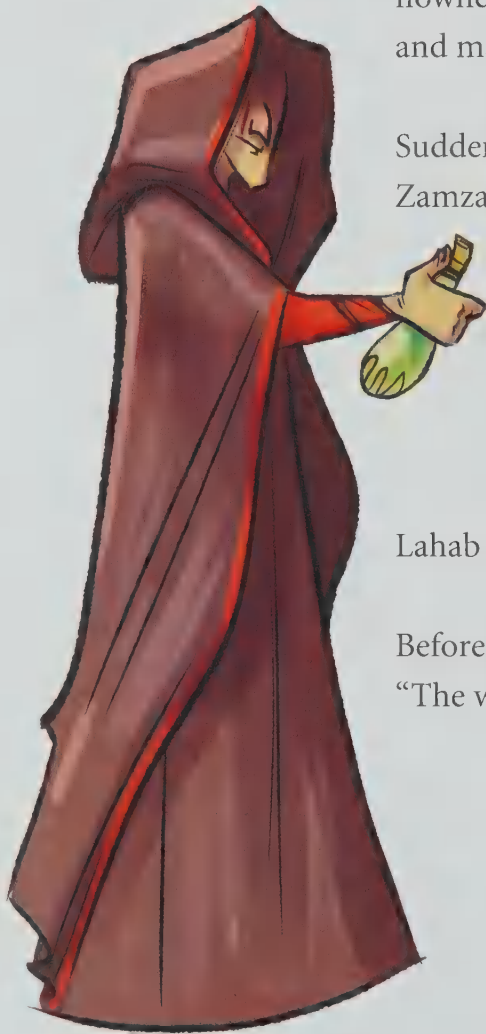
Haris mounted his horse and whispered to himself, "It is You we worship. It is You we ask for help."⁵ Behind him he could hear a clamour of shouts and shrieks from the forest. Haris led his horse into a gallop, winding his way through the forest, away from the bandits.

After riding for most of the day Haris felt he was safe. Lahab's men were nowhere in sight. Haris dismounted next to a stream to water his horse and make *wudu*.

Suddenly, a tall hooded figure crept up beside his horse and took the Zamzam water. He threw one bottle - smashing it on the ground.

Lahab lifted the second bottle up, eager to spill the blessed water away.

Before he could, Haris cracked his whip and snatched the bottle back. "The water is for the princess, and inshallah I shall deliver it to her."





Lahab laughed. "So you think *you* can escape *and* cure her? Look around you, my men are everywhere! You are trapped."

"Your thugs cannot harm me unless God wills," said Haris, "and it is only God Almighty who can cure."

"Seize him!" shouted Lahab. The bandits charged towards Haris.

Haris was surrounded.
Lahab's men approached from all sides.
Suddenly the sorcerer hurled a handful of
powder. Haris saw his chance.



As the smoke filled the air Haris
looked for an escape. He cracked his
whip and swirled it around a tree
branch and quickly pulled himself
up. Below Haris, Lahab's men were
frantically looking for him.

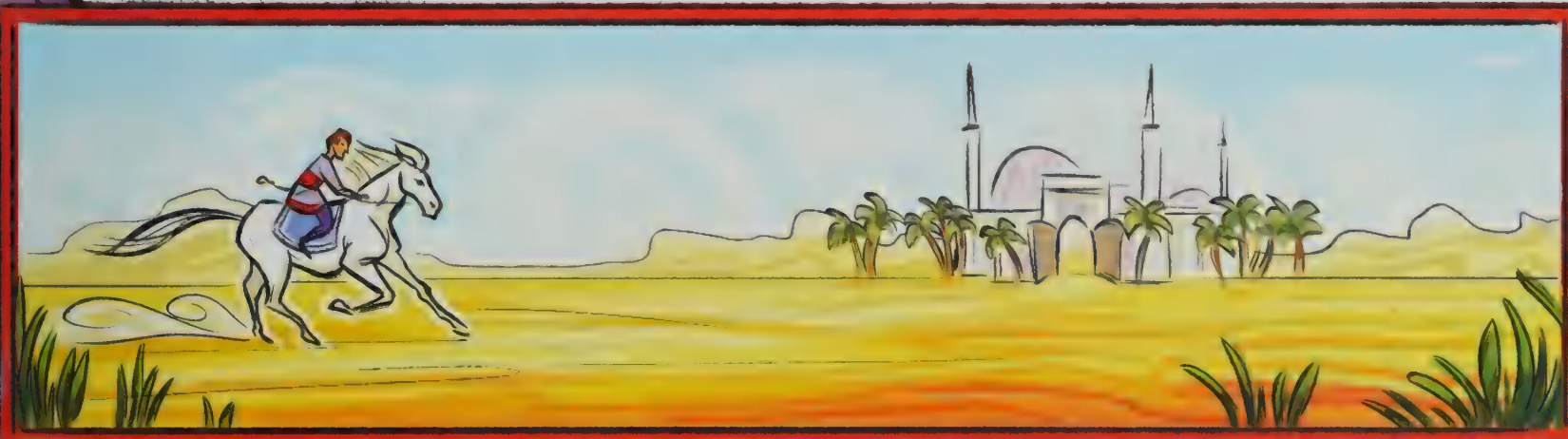


Haris whistled to his horse and leapt down onto the saddle just as an arrow whizzed past his ear.

“Capture him!” bellowed a voice.
Haris rode away as Lahab’s men gave chase.

Haris approached the palace in a furious gallop. The guards recognized him and ordered the gates to be opened.

As Haris entered the palace, an alarm was raised and the gates were slammed shut.



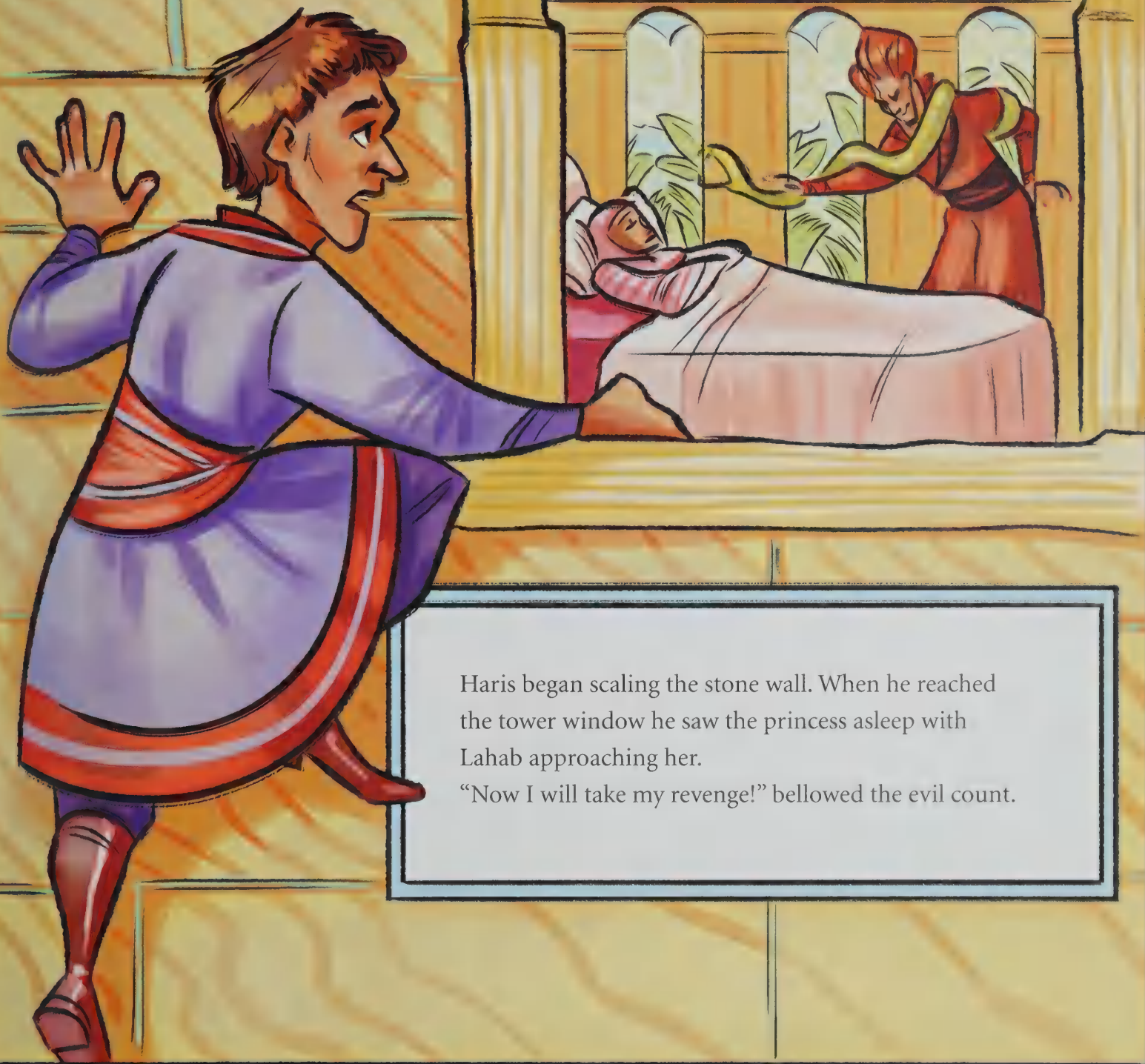
The king and Lady Masarah met Haris at the palace entrance. "We must go to Zaynab immediately," said Haris. "Lahab is close by, she is in danger."

When they reached the princess's room, her door was locked. The king ordered his men to break it down. Haris could not wait. He leapt up onto the window ledge.

"No, Haris," shouted the king. "It's too dangerous!"

"Have no fear Father," said Haris, "for God Almighty has said, 'Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us: He is our Protector.'⁶"





Haris began scaling the stone wall. When he reached the tower window he saw the princess asleep with Lahab approaching her.

“Now I will take my revenge!” bellowed the evil count.



Haris jumped into the room and knocked the count back. "I will protect her from you!" he yelled.

"You again," said Lahab, as he took out a dagger and lunged at Haris. The young man sidestepped the blow and snatched the bag of powder from Lahab's belt.

"Meet your death!" hissed Lahab as he lifted his snake to hurl at Haris.

But Haris had already thrown the bag of powder, which flew into Lahab's face. The room filled with thick smoke. The snake squirmed and sank its poisonous fangs into its evil master. Poisoned and blind, Lahab let out a shrill scream and fell to the floor.






The smoke cleared and soon the king and queen stood beside Haris at Zaynab's bedside. Haris held the Zamzam water tightly.

Lady Masarah looked down at Count Lahab as he lay on the ground.

And the book (of deeds) will be placed (before you); and you will see the sinful in great terror because of what is (recorded) therein⁷

When Lahab's bandits learned of his death many fled, never to be seen again. Others repented, and returned to the kingdom in peace.





The Zamzam water was given to the princess amidst hopeful prayers. After a few days Zaynab opened her eyes.

When the princess had regained her health, the king and queen's joy was boundless. They celebrated the news by planting pink roses throughout the land. Then the king announced a grand *walimah*.



Invitations were sent far and wide, and the four oldest and wisest *alims* in the kingdom were summoned.

When *du'as* were made for Haris and Zaynab's happiness, echoes of *ameen* were heard all over the kingdom.

And they all lived happily ever after, under the protection of Allah.

*He said, "Do not be afraid, I am with you both, hearing and seeing everything."*⁸

GLOSSARY

Abaya – An overgarment worn by Muslim women and older girls.

Alim – An Islamic scholar or one who is knowledgeable.

Ameen – ‘Amen’; said at the end of a prayer or supplication.

Aqiqah – An Islamic tradition of sacrificing an animal on the birth of a child. Guests are invited to share the thanksgiving meal.

As-salamu ‘alaykum – ‘Peace be with you’.

Ayah – A verse of the Qur’an.

Du‘a – Supplication; personal prayer.

Hajar – The wife of Prophet Abraham*.

Ihram – A simple garment worn by pilgrims for umrah and hajj.

Inshallah – ‘God-willing’.

Jazaki Allahu Khayran – ‘May God reward your goodness’ (feminine grammatical form).

Kaaba – The first house of worship, built by Prophets Abraham and Ishmael* in Makkah.

Lahab – Flames.

Nikah – Marriage.

Safa and Marwa – Hills in the desert outside Makkah. These are part of the hajj and umrah pilgrimages.

Sujud – Prostration with one’s head on the ground, as performed during the ritual prayer.

Taqwa – Piety; God-consciousness.

Umrah – The lesser pilgrimage to Makkah, performed at any time of year.

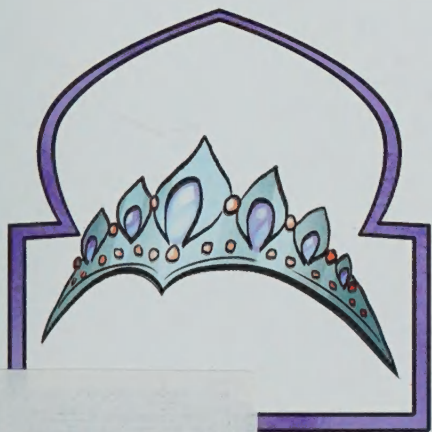
Walimah – A ceremony to celebrate a marriage.

Wudu – Ablution performed before the prescribed prayer.

Zamzam – Water from a well found in Makkah. Hajar and Ishmael drank from it when they were left in the desert.

REFERENCES FOR QUR'AN AND HADITH

1. Qur'an 113:1-5
2. Qur'an 4:45
3. Qur'an 31:18
4. Hadith from the collection of Abu Dawud
5. Qur'an 1:5
6. Qur'an 9:51
7. Qur'an 18:49
8. Qur'an 20:46



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After the wicked Count Lahab promises to destroy Princess Zaynab she is hidden within the king's castle. Under the loving and watchful eyes of Lady Masarah, Zaynab grows up to become an empowered young woman with strong faith and helpful manners.

Upon the news of Zaynab's wedding Lahab finds a way to present her with a gift for her *walimah*: a beautiful hijab pin, covered in poison.

A single prick of the pin leaves her in a deep, unbreakable sleep.

Her husband, Haris, must journey to Makkah to pray for her recovery and bring back Zamzam water for her to drink. But, faced by Count Lahab and his outlaws, what does his destiny hold?



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